

My name is Nicole Hutchings and I am a senior student at NVCC. I sit before you 5th generation out of slavery. I am African American and 3 tribes Native American. I grew up in a warzone in the streets of Bridgeport. I am a single mother with three children. I have been living on my own since I was 14 years old and had to raise my baby brother whom was only 2 years younger than I. Our mother had mental illness and could not raise us. I grew up “Only” seeing hustles in the streets, making a next hustle to feed themselves and family. These were my “Only” mentors... I lost my baby brother in the streets of Bridgeport; Norman becoming the 51st homicide in

1993. My brother was murdered at age 18 with only a 4th grade education. I made a promise to my brother that I would go to school, make a better life for my children and he, my brother would live through me. I kept my promise! I have raised my children in the Naugatuck Valley Area, went to college and became a mentor in my college and community. Who would had thought a girl like me could ever go to school, get an education and become what I only seen on television. With, the help of dedicated faculty at NVCC, I found hope and purpose. Many professors believed in me when I didn't know how to believe in myself; financial aid funding was

available for me to be able to explore my options as I was on my path of figuring out what my purpose was. There will be many persons like me that will be walking in the doors of community colleges. They will also need dedicated faculty, available programs and funding as it took for me to get on my path of greatness. I serve as Black Student Union President, AAUW Student Ambassador for Woman at NVCC and an active activist in the community. I am graduating in May! I will be graduating with a Dual Program receiving my degree and certification. I plan to continue my education due, to my experiences and growth at NVCC. With

that being said, I am representing so many faces that will need all that a community college has to offer. My children have a positive role model before them today to look up too. They can say, "My mom made it, I have no excuse!" I am so grateful for all that was available for me to find my calling and purpose. I ask that you remember my story as the budget is being decided. Thank you.